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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0025
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000085

SIPDIS
AF/S FOR BRIAN WALCH
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR MICHELLE GAVIN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2020/02/08
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ZI](#) [SOCI](#) [PHUM](#) [KWMN](#) [KTIP](#) [PINR](#)
SUBJECT: Ambassador's Call on Zim Minister of Women's Affairs,
Gender, and Community Development

CLASSIFIED BY: Charles A. Ray, Ambassador, STATE, EXEC; REASON:
1.4(B), (D)

11. (SBU) The Ambassador met on February 5 with ZANU-PF's Olivia Muchena, Zimbabwe's Minister of Women's Affairs, Gender and Community Development. Muchena described the objectives of her ministry and briefly commented on the Global Political Agreement.

12. (SBU) With regard to women, Muchena said her goals were empowerment, particularly in the area of agriculture where women play a large role in the subsistence economy; micro finance and assistance to small and medium enterprises, particularly in food processing and mining (where over 400 women work); and enabling more women to work at the corporate level. Muchena said she was aware of significant gender violence; Zimbabwe had progressed legally, but education was lacking. (NOTE: She handed us a brochure on domestic violence and a sheet on "Laws that enhance the status of women." prepared by the ministry. END NOTE.) She noted that she had been working with civil society and the Women's Parliamentary Caucus to increase education. Finally, and somewhat vaguely, Muchena said she was working to get communities to work together on common problems.

13. (SBU) The Ambassador raised the issue of trafficking in persons. Muchena acknowledged the problem, but said this was within the purview of the Ministry of Home Affairs. (Septel)

14. (SBU) Noting that she had received her PhD in the U.S., Muchena said she would welcome exchanges with U.S. women. Reality was often different than perceptions, she commented, and she hoped women from each country would see the reality in the other.

15. (SBU) Turning to the Global Political Agreement (GPA), Muchena said there were people inside and outside the government, in all parties, who did not want it to work. But progress was being made. It was necessary, she urged, to ignore the "sound bites" of specific events and look at the GPA as a process that was moving forward. She noted the mutual suspicions of MDC and ZANU-PF ministers when the first cabinet meetings were held. Now, a camaraderie and sense of common purpose were developing.

COMMENT

¶6. (SBU) Muchena is allied with the Mujuru faction of ZANU-PF and is considered a moderate. Last year, she defeated Opal Muchinguri, an ally of Emmerson Mnangagwa, for leadership of the ZANU-PF Women's League. Like other ZANU-PF moderates who want closer relations with the U.S., Muchena is a firm opponent of ZDERA and believes it has contributed to Zimbabwe's economic decline. END COMMENT.

BIO NOTE

¶7. (U) Muchena received her B.A. and PhD in Agricultural Extension from Iowa State University and also has an MSc in Agricultural

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Education and Rural Development from Cornell University. She entered politics through Bishop Abel Muzorewa's United African National Conference before independence. After the post-independence demise of the party, she joined ZANU-PF. Before her current job, she served as Minister of Agriculture, Minister of State in the Vice President's office responsible for Lands, Land Reform and Resettlement, Minister of State in the President's office responsible for Science and Technology Development, and Minister of Science and Technology. END BIO NOTE.
RAY